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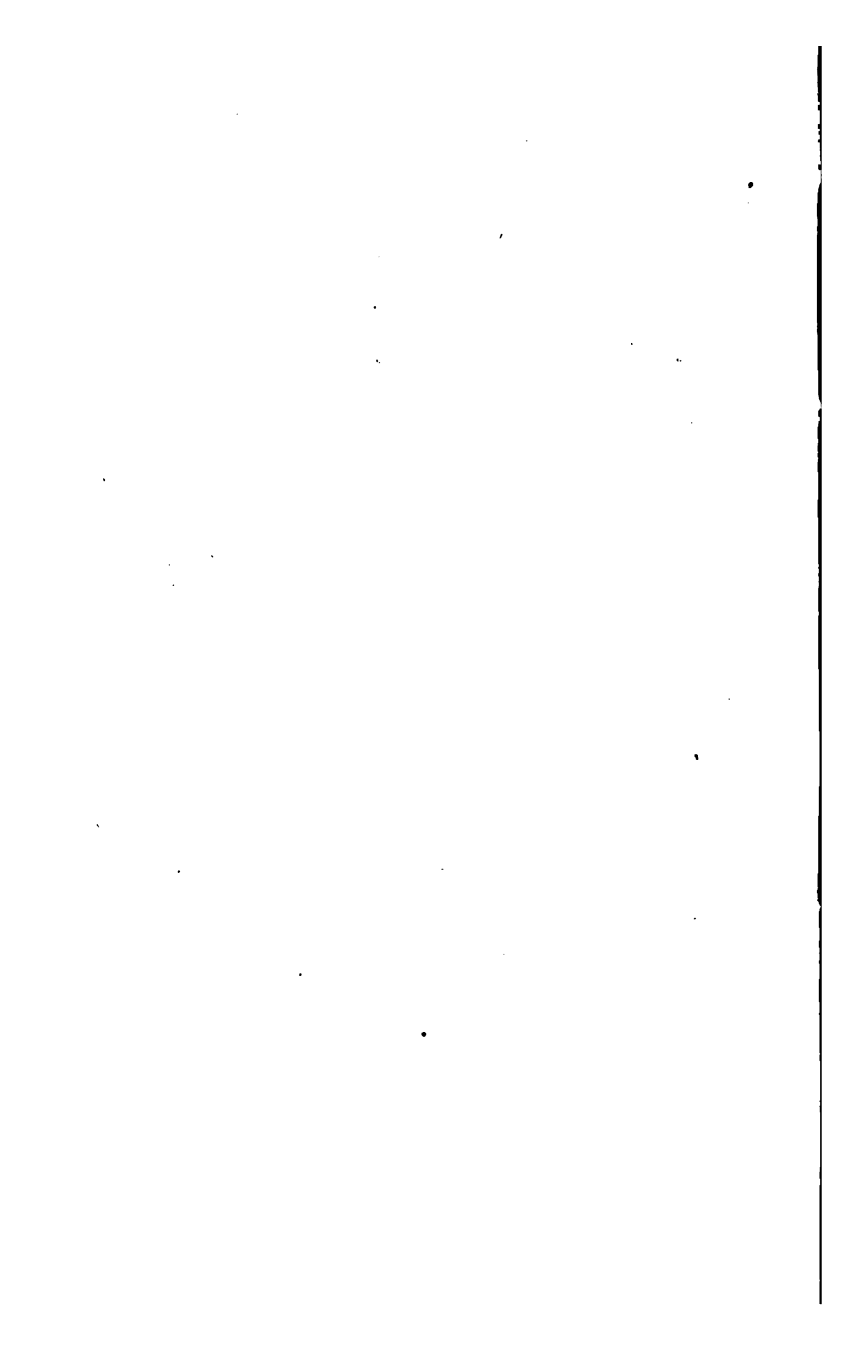


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THE
APOLOGY OF AN UNBELIEVER.



THE
APOLOGY OF AN UNBELIEVER.

BY
LOUIS VIARDOT.



"The Eternity of the world once admitted, all else follows."
Sainte Beuve, Letter to the Author.

Translated from the Third French Edition,

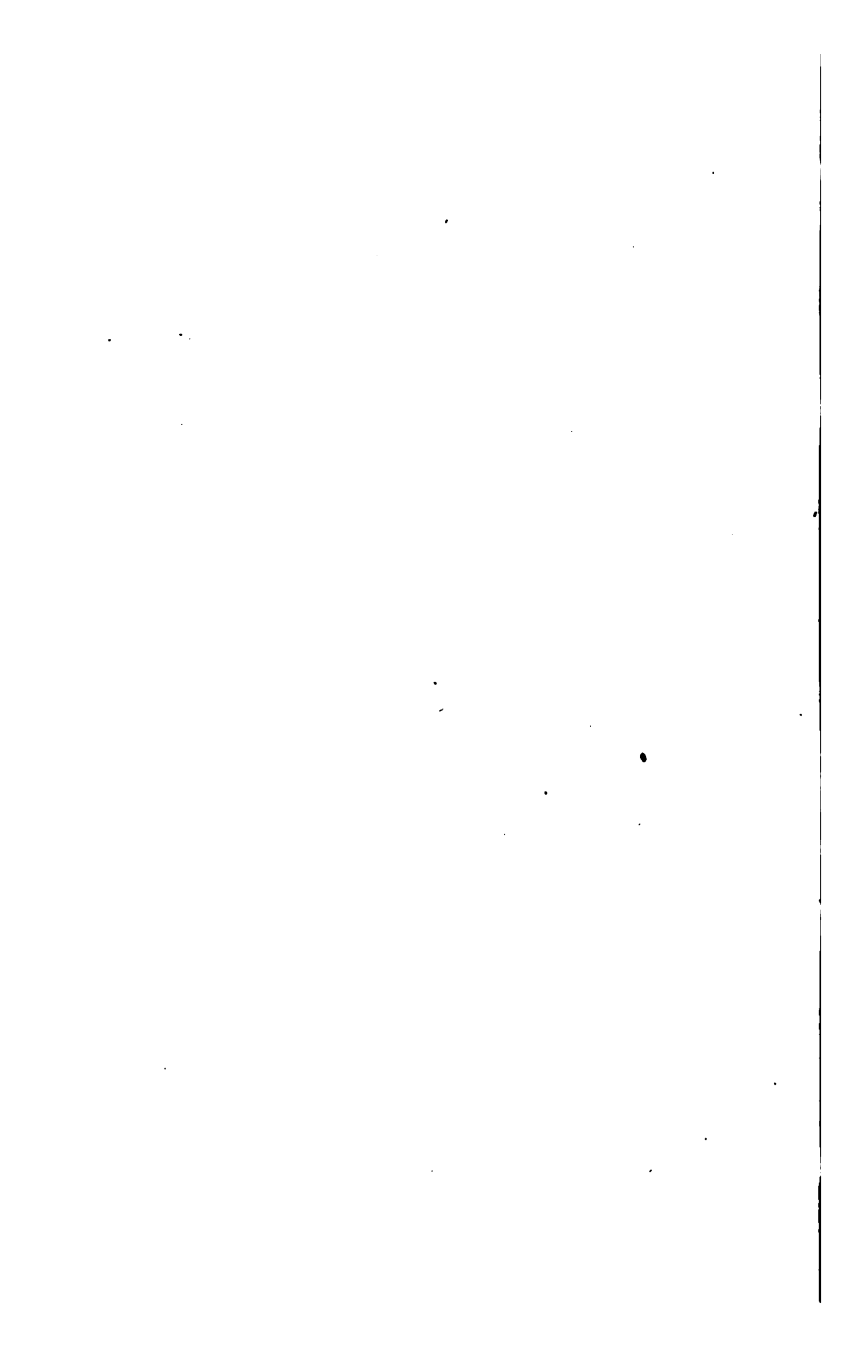
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BADEN, *November*, 1866.

To P

It has happened to us sometimes, in the course of conversation, to touch upon the great questions of philosophy. It is not a good plan. Conversation is necessarily broken up by interruptions, by digressions, by questions and answers. One loses continually the line of thought and reasoning. I desire to begin and to continue the conversation in order to enunciate, in a few concise paragraphs, my opinions on these subjects. They have sprung from the reflections of a long, honourable, and studious lifetime. It is not my fault if these reflections have destroyed, piece by piece, all the edifice of ordinary belief (an edifice in which I long took shelter), and have reduced me like Montaigne, to have nothing whereon to lay my head, but the "pillow of doubt." Far from professing incredulity, I confess it, and seek in all

Incarnation,* the Redemption, the Eucharist, which are believed in, precisely as St. Augustine says, *quia absurdum*.† Miracles, from that of Joshua stopping the sun, or Jesus raising up Lazarus, down to St. Apolline, through whose intercession toothache is cured; Sacraments which obtrude themselves throughout our lives, from baptism to extreme unction;—round about man, angels and demons, legends of Paradise, of Purgatory, and of Hell. This system is complete, it is convenient. Believers have learnt it; they teach it, they hold to it; they believe they believe.

It is our duty to examine.

On the one hand, in the last and in the present century, in the *Profession de Foi du Vicaire Savoyard*, and in the *Religion Naturelle* of my

* Like the Avatar, according to the Brahmins, of Vischnou in the bosom of the Virgin Maia: like the two twins brought into the world by the Virgin Tétéoïnan in Mexico, etc.

† "I do not seek to understand in order to believe," said Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, "but to believe in order to understand." His successors, the contemporaries of Darwin, Huxley and Tyndall, continue to preach the same doctrine.

worthy friend Jules Simon, the spiritualist philosophers have put forth a vast improvement on official Christianity. Although religious, they have shown themselves to be sincere, reasonable, tolerant, humane. They have sternly rejected all superstitions, all *absurda*. The only positive beliefs which they have retained are those in an eternal God, the Creator and Ruler of the world, and in an immortal soul, gifted with free will, and which will, in another world, be judged according to its works. Upon these two fundamental beliefs they found a pure and wise morality, capable of consoling and sanctifying our lives, and happy, indeed, it seems to me, would mankind be, if in its urgent need of some sort of religion, it adopted this simple form of a purified Deism.

I admit it: but, as Channing himself, the pious apostle of the Unitarians, says, man believes what he can, not what he would. He ought to question the reason which God has given him, "reason that controller-general of all that is within and without the vault of heaven" (Montaigne). Our Spiritualists themselves say, with pride, "We prefer error freely searched for, to truth servilely adopted" (Paul Janet, *Spiritualisme Français*).

Again I say, it is our duty to inquire.

II. OF THE CREATION.

So long as men believed that their little planet was the centre of the universe—that above the earth flat and immoveable,* the firmament, alternately traversed by two great luminaries, “the sun to rule by day, the moon by night,” formed a vault—one understands that they could believe in a creation like that related in Genesis. The seven days, which are seven periods, have a certain agreement with the course of the world’s formation. Men could then literally admit, for instance, the God of the Jews, who walked about in Eden, ascended on a cloud, hid Himself behind a bush, surrounded Himself, in order to increase His majesty, with thunder and lightning, talked familiarly with Adam, Cain, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and did not even take it amiss that the Philistines and Amalekites had different gods of their own. But now-a-days, science has pierced with a sure glance, the immensity of the heavens, and with a no less sure hand has laid down the

* “I have made the earth like a sheet, and the heavens like a tent above it” (Psalms).

“And Gaia (the earth) produced, first, starry Ouranos (the sky), equal to herself, for he covers all her surface” (Hesiod).

“God has given you the earth for a base, and the heavens for an abode” (Koran).

mighty laws which rule the universe. The mere fact that the Almanack predicts to an hour the return of a tide, of an eclipse, of a comet, demonstrates the power of science, and brings it home to the most ignorant. She has necessarily shaken the obsolete and childish beliefs of primitive humanity. When Galileo said, "*E pur si muove*,"* he destroyed with a word all the theogonies which had prevailed among men. Newton, Buffon, Volta, Linnæus, Lavoisier, Lalande, Herschel, Darwin, Kirchhof (by these I would designate, astronomy, natural science, chemistry, geometry, natural history), have completed his work and his victory. We now know that this earth is only one of the smallest satellites of the sun,—himself, although the astronomers give him thirteen hundred thousand times the volume of the earth, but one of the eighteen thousand little stars which go to compose the nebula which, among five or six thousand others, is called the Milky Way. And each time that we succeed in enlarging the

* Léon Foucault has made the motion of the earth visible and tangible. We might well say of Galileo's exclamation, what Byron said of a far less important one :—

"Methinks these are the most tremendous words,
Since 'Mené, Mené, Tekel,' and 'Upharsin.'"

lens of the telescope, new suns are discovered in the depths of the immeasurable ocean of worlds.*

And we know yet more. The human mind, although unable, confined as it is by the limits of our senses, to comprehend it, is nevertheless compelled to admit the infinity of space. The question, "What is there on this side, what is there on that?" cannot be answered. Draw in thought a line through space, stretch it out with all the power of your imagination; exhaust the language of arithmetic in order to determine its length; accumulate millions of figures to express millions of leagues;—in vain; you will not reach the goal; there will always be a *plus ultra*. For want of an assignable and possible limit, we are compelled to consider space as infinite. How then admit the creation of worlds as infinite as space, without beginning, without limits? Then it is that the

* That which the telescope shows us in the infinity of greatness, the microscope shows us in the infinity of smallness. If there is a star whose light takes several hundred thousand years to arrive at the earth, although travelling at the rate of 78,000 leagues a second, we should remember that thousands of blood globules are contained in a drop of our blood, that thousands of infusoriæ exist in a drop of water, and that thousands of animalcules compose each cubic foot of the Paris oolite stone.

impossibility of a creation strikes on the eye of reason, the impossibility of making anything out of nothing, and in this case of making everything out of nothing. So we see how formidable is the truth of the old adage, *ex nihilo nihil fit*.

But this line of reasoning is not the only one which demonstrates the impossibility of a creation. There is another which is, I think, still more powerful and still more unavoidable.

If the infinity of space be admitted, the infinity of time must also be granted. They are co-relative. If we cannot say, "What is there on this side, what is there on that?"—neither can we ask, "What was there formerly, what will there be hereafter?" Time, too, has always its *plus ultra*. Heaping up centuries in time, is like heaping up leagues in space; the one is as ineffectual and useless a process as the other. Time, then, like space, is without beginning, without end, without bounds; in a word, it is infinite.

All religions have perceived this and have made God the Creator, an eternal Being, anterior and posterior to time.

L'Éternel est son nom, le monde est son ouvrage.

RACINE.

But when did the Eternal form this work, the world? At a given moment of time? This is what all the cosmogonies affirm, and what, indeed, the very word and idea of creation necessarily implies. God then passed all the previous eternity in inaction, without acting, without producing, without reigning over His works and His creatures, as He is held to do during the succeeding eternity. But what is an Eternity cut in two? How conceive the great Geometer, the Demiourgos, the Maker and Ruler of infinite worlds, asleep during all the previous eternity, then awaking of a sudden, in order to call up this world from nothingness, to people this fathomless void, and to the universal death to give universal life—to make of this nothing all, and to undertake its government during a second eternity? The contradiction is flagrant. The necessary Being could not rest a moment idle; the active and eternal Being could never cease eternally acting. If He has filled up, without a gap, the infinity of space, so, too, He must have filled up, without a blank, the infinity of time.*

* *An credo in tenebris vita ac mærore jacebat,
Donec diluxit rerum genitalis origo?*

We, therefore, are compelled to admit, that the universe, like its Creator, is eternal.* But in allowing that the universe is eternal, that it is co-eternal with God, you allow by that very admission that it was not created, creation supposing that the workman preceded his work. Now, if the world is eternal and uncreated, it created itself and is God, and you are a Pantheist.† In any case, the notion of creation strives in vain to overcome two insurmountable obstacles, the infinity of space and the infinity of time. On the

* "In the economy of the world," said Hutton, "I can find no traces of a beginning, no prospect of an end."—(LYELL, *Principles of Geology*.)

† "Omnia sunt Deus; Deus est omnia; creator et creatura idem." This was the doctrine which Amaulri of Chartres, in the year 1208, left to his followers. The priests dug up his body and threw it into the sewer.

Eschylus had long before said, "Zeus is the earth; Zeus is the sky; Zeus is the whole world, and yet more than the world."

And the Vêdas—"Aditi is the sky; Aditi is the air; Aditi is the father, the mother, and the son; Aditi is all the gods and the five kinds of beings; Aditi is that which has been born, and that which shall be born."

And Cato in Lucan—"Jupiter est quodcumque vides quocumque moveris."

And the inscription of the veiled Isis—"I am all that is."

other hand, "from the eternity of the world all else deduces itself."—*SAINTE BEUVE*.*

"Matter, and the force which belongs to it," says Büchner, with Vogt, Moleschott, Feuerbach, Virchow, etc., "could not be created, any more than they could be destroyed." † It is impossible that they had a beginning, impossible that they will have an end. The two together produce that assemblage of phenomena which we call the world.

Besides, the creation, as a supernatural act,

* Letter written to the author, 17th April, 1867:—"My dear Friend,—I have read your Apology, which ought not to take that name, for the wise man has no need to defend himself. It is a *compte rendu* which you make, not for others but for yourself. It appears to me exact and logical in all points. The creation would be the first miracle. The eternity of the world once admitted, all else follows. The fixedness of law is a source of consolation for those who reflect, and, at the same time, a cause for sadness. We submit with gravity. This respectful and mute gravity of the thoughtful man is, in its way, a religion, a homage rendered to the majesty of the universe. Our desires, ephemeral and contradictory as they are, prove nothing; they are as clouds which meet at the will of the winds, but above them soars and reigns the order of the stars. You, my dear friend, are of the religion of Democritus, of Aristotle, of Epicurus, of Lucretius, of Seneca, of Spinoza, of Buffon, of Diderot, of Goethe, of Humboldt. It is good enough company.—*SAINTE-BEUVE*."

† *Ex nihilo nihil, in nihilum nil posse reverti.*

LUCRETIUS.

would be a miracle, and of all miracles the most miraculous. This very word condemns it, our reason no longer admitting of it: either the miraculous does away with science, or science does away with the miraculous. We must take our choice.*

"The science of nature," says M. Ernest Havet, "is essentially non-religious, since religion confounds itself with the supernatural." Now this science begins to raise the veil which has hitherto covered the origin of things. We can conceive without difficulty the origin of a planet like ours in a period comprising centuries of centuries. A fragment of a nebula detached from the central star, and launched into space; a slight paring from the edge of the sun becomes first a mass of gas, then of molecules, which the power of rotatory motion unites, compresses, agglomerates, sets on fire; an amalgam of elements in a state of fusion; then, as it cools, the formation of

* "Every miracle, if proved, would show that the creation does not deserve the veneration with which we regard it. And the mystic believer must needs infer, from the imperfection of the creation, the imperfection of the Creator."—B. COTTA. See the Third of J. J. Rousseau's *Lettres écrites de la Montagne*—"Take away the miracles of the New Testament, and all the earth is at the feet of Jesus Christ."

a mineral mass, and of the terrestrial crust above the central furnace; next the condensed vapour changes to water, which falls to the surface; next the successive appearance on the surface of the earth, watered by springs and rivers—of vegetation, more and more diversified and complicated; lastly, ascending the scale of beings, the successive appearance of animals, from the polypus to man.*

* See the *Époques de la Nature* of Buffon, and the *Exposition du Système du Monde* of Laplace. See, too, the excellent chapter, entitled "Primitive Generation," in Ludwig Büchner's work, *Kraft und Stoff*; *Les Commencements du Monde*, by M. de Jouvenel; *La Terre*, by M. Élisée Reclus, etc. Since one of our loftiest forests would not produce, reduced to coal, but a thin bed, little more than half an inch thick, it has been calculated that, in order to form the thick seams of a coal basin, like that of Northumberland, not less than nine million years would be necessary. Yet the coal period is only one, of five or six which preceded the historic epoch, that of the appearance of man on the earth. As to this period, see the observations of Mr. Vivian on Kent's Hole, near Torquay. "A layer containing Roman pottery, and consequently 2000 years old, was found covered by stalagmites, less than a quarter of an inch thick. By comparing this thickness with that of the thicker layers of subjacent stalagmites, in which were found shaped bones and cut flints mixed up with the remains of great Pachyderms, it becomes evident by a comparison of proportions that man, the contemporary of the rhinoceros and the elephant, existed in England 264,000 years ago."—(Extract from the *Pensée Nouvelle*.)

On the one hand, the decisive discoveries of Palæontology; on the other, organic chemistry, no longer confining itself to the decomposition of bodies, but defining the formation of composite substances; yet again—an important new law, which Epicurus and Lucretius * had, as it were, foreseen (the “Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection” of Darwin), which is destined to hold in natural history the place of gravitation in natural philosophy, by explaining how nature gradually rejects the least perfect specimens of each species, and even the most imperfect species of each genus; these discoveries enable us to conceive the slow and long-enduring process, which I should venture to name *auto-creation*.†

* *De Rerum Natura*. Lib. v. 869-75. ◊

† When we see with what extreme slowness, with what successive and gradual endeavours, Nature has formed, modified, and perfected things, (“*Natura non facit saltus*,” said Linnæus), we can only repeat the just reflection of a German philosopher—“Whence do animals come?” he asks himself; and he answers, “The idea that God created them by His will is not only unsatisfactory, it is unworthy of Him. The grand Soul of the world, which had made the Solar System and the Milky Way, could it stoop to create experiments on animals, with the intention of re-making them if not good enough?”—ZIMMERMANN. What will the partisans of the biblical cosmogony say to this?

Assuredly those who have seen the natives of Australia, with their low foreheads, their protruding and pendulous bellies, their long spare arms, and with minds yet more decrepit than their limbs, or, rather, plunged in the deepest stupidity, can easily believe that a gorilla can change into a man.* And do we not still see

* At present the Australian race has, so to speak, disappeared, and among the races which have formerly disappeared, some might have been found still more akin to the animals: for example, the Maillés of Guiana, who lived on trees.

“As we meet with extinct kangaroos and wombats in Australia, extinct llamas and sloths in South America, so in equatorial Africa, and in certain islands of the East Indian Archipelago, may we hope to meet hereafter with lost types of the anthropoid Primates, allied to the gorilla, chimpanzee, and orang-outang.” — LYELL, *Antiquity of Man*, p. 499.

“If zoological morphology were studied with the penetrating eye of a Goethe, a Cuvier, a Geoffroy, a St. Hilaire, think you she would not disclose the secret of the gradual development of humanity, that strange phenomenon, by which one animal species acquires a decisive superiority over the others.”—E. RENAN. As the result of his valuable researches in comparative anatomy, Mr. T. H. Huxley places man, under the name of “anthropinian,” simply in the first of the seven families of Primates among vertebrated animals. “I beg pardon of MM. the Cardinals,” says M. Guarin de Vitry, “but the human race, instead of

nations of cannibals two thousand years after Plato, eight thousand years after the Egyptian dynasty, by whom the great Pyramids were built? * If a planet can form itself in space, through the influence of its sun, it can just as well destroy itself, either by the exhaustion of its heat, or by a cataclysm; witness the debris of the planet pointed out by Kepler, which peoples with a crowd of asteroids the space between Mars and Jupiter. A sun itself, if it can get on fire (as is the supposition concerning certain nebulæ), can become extinct, and in the universal and eternal life its existence of millions of centuries does not go for more than the life of a butterfly. Thus is demonstrated, from the highest to the lowest point of the universe—from the star to the insect

having come down from heaven, seems rather to have risen from the earth, and the monkeys are more nearly related to us than the angels." Hallam says—"If man was made in the image of God, he was also made in the image of an ape."—*Literature of Europe*, vol. iv., p. 162.

* "The western tribes of Indians have not yet quitted the primitive stage through which every human race is bound to pass at the beginning of its career, that of a nomadic people of hunters, the same as in the stone age. The Indians, if the whites had not brought them iron, would still have weapons of flint, like the antediluvian race which peopled Europe, and sheltered itself in caves."
—L. SIMONIN, *Excursion chez les Peaux-Rouges*.

—the fatal destiny of every being and of every thing : birth, progress, rise, decline, fall, and death.

Once the impossibility of a creation as regards space and time, by an Eternal Being anterior to time and superior to space, is admitted —once we admit, on the contrary, that matter can no more be created than it can be destroyed ; that, therefore, the eternity of matter, as the illustrious author of the *Cosmos* believes, is incontestable, and that the continual re-creation of matter is a consequence of its eternity, then we remember and understand the reply of Laplace, explaining his *Mécanique Céleste* to Napoleon. “But in your system,” said the Emperor, “what do you do with God?” “Ah, God!” replied the astronomer, “is a hypothesis of which I have no need.” Laplace spoke thus of a personal God, who was said to have created and to govern the world. But under the great name of God we may, I think, be allowed to place a different idea, and one, at least, as lofty.

Let us try.

When Pascal enounced his well-known saying, “Truth on one side the Pyrenees is error on the other,” he spoke of conventional truths, those which the ever-varying opinions of mankind make and destroy. Assuredly he would not have

spoken thus of mathematical truths, he would have said with Newton—*Natura est semper sibi consona*. For he had said himself,—Nature always imitates herself. Pascal, who even then could measure and calculate the movements of the heavenly bodies in their unchanging course, knew full well that one and the same geometry prevails throughout the universe; he was well aware that everywhere the diameter of a circle is the third of its circumference—that everywhere in a triangle the square of the hypotenuse equals the squares of the two other sides. If Pascal lived now-a-days, and if in examining the composition of one of the rays of the sun, he were to ascertain of what metals the body of the sun is composed, he would acknowledge that one and the same chemistry prevails throughout the universe, and then, remodelling his celebrated dictum, he would say, “Truth in one star, in one world, is truth in all stars, and in all worlds.” Then need he only carry his inexorable logic a little farther and say, “The same nature, the same morality, the same laws for all things, and for every being in every world.” And then he might thus complete his idea, “God is the general result of all particular laws; He is the original and final law, the highest law, the law of laws.”

III.—OF PROVIDENCE.

This is what the government of the world by God, its Creator, is called.

Voltaire believed firmly in a Creator, "The work," he incessantly repeats, "demonstrates the workman."* This argument is not, however, quite so convincing as he believed it. He admits the eternity of matter. Now, if the work like its maker be eternal, if it is its own maker, this argument disappears. It is then Spinoza, who is in the right, like Anaxagoras, Aristotle, Epicurus, Lucretius, Seneca, Abelard, Amaulri of Chartres, the great Chinese sect of Foë, and so many others.† Voltaire, it seems to me, should have been more careful; first, because the creation would have been a miracle, and he did not believe in them; next, because a watchmaker can only

* "L'univers m'embarrasse et je ne puis songer
Que cette horloge existe, et n'ait point d'horloger."

(LES CABALES.)

† A lady who sought alms for a charity, having received from a man well known to be an Atheist, a handsome sum; "What, Sir," she exclaimed, "you are so generous, and yet you do not believe in a God. You know though that Voltaire himself said, 'Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer.'" "Oh, Madam," was the reply, "that is exactly what has been done."

make a watch when he has all the materials at hand, and is therefore its arranger and not its creator ; lastly, because in persistently denying God's Providence, he, by that very denial, put the Divine creation, as it were, out of court. For, how can one conceive that, after having created this world, God immediately abandoned it.

. . . . en détourne sa face,
Et d'un pied dédaigneux le lançant dans l'espace,
Rentre dans son repos ?

According to this system God Eternal awoke all of a sudden in the midst of His everlasting existence, made the world and its laws, and then went to sleep again for another eternity.*

But when he denies God's Providence, Voltaire gives much more solid reasons. It is only necessary for him to establish the existence of evil. Evil exists ; who can deny it ? Physical and moral evil, under all possible forms. We behold the intemperance of the seasons, from the icy

* The inconsequence of Voltaire's deism, as M. André Lefèvre, the clever imitator of Lucretius, has well shown, is in some measure recognised and allowed by Voltaire himself, in the boldest portion of his philosophical works, —the Dialogues of Lucretius and Posidonius, of Evhemerus and Callicrates ; between A. B. C., etc.

cold of the poles to the burning heat of the tropics, volcanoes, earthquakes, floods, drought, famine; we feel illnesses, wounds, pains, and broken affections, eternal separations; we are the witnesses and the victims of injustice, of violence, of spoliation, of tyranny, of murder, and of fratricidal wars. Everywhere force and knavery triumph over right. History, full of atrocious crimes, but too often unpunished, and of frightful calamities, is but the chronicle of the woes of humanity. Misfortunes, which are undeserved, for we none of us ask for life, none of us chose our lot. We have endured them, we strive unceasingly against the ills of nature and society. How can we reconcile the existence of God with that of evil. If God exists, He is Almighty, and being Almighty, He is consequently all good. Thus He is defined, and thus He is represented to us. Why then does He allow evil to continue? If He cannot destroy it, He is powerless; if He can, but will not do so, He is wicked, He is evil itself.

This argument has always been and will always be without an answer.*

* This is the argument of Epicurus, as cited by Lactantius (*De Ira Dei*, cap. xiii.), who vainly tries to answer

Men have known it in all times and in all countries, at least by instinct; for there is hardly any religion which, in order to justify itself, seeing the ills of this world, has not admitted two rival principles, always enemies and in perpetual strife,—the principle of good and the principle of evil. They are the Orimasdes and Ahrimanes of the Persians, Brahma and Shiva of the Hindoos, Osiris and Typhon of the Egyptians, Tonacateuctli and Tescatlipoca of the Aztecs, Vitaouentrou and Houakouvou of the Patagonians, Jehovah and Satan of the Jews, Allah and Shítan of the Arabs: so too, in fact, God and the Devil. But by this Manichæan creed the difficulty is only misplaced, not solved. We at once ask, “Why does God not destroy the devil? If He wishes to, but has not the power, He is not Almighty; if he has the power but will not use it, He is not all-good. In one way or other He ceases to be God.”

it. “Either God wishes to destroy evil and cannot; or He can do so but will not; or neither wishes nor has the power to destroy it; or He desires and is able to do so. If He wishes to destroy evil, but cannot do so, He is impotent; if He can, but will not do so, He is wicked; if He neither desires nor has the power to destroy it, He is impotent as well as wicked; if He can and will do so, how comes there to be any evil in the world?”

Had we not better believe in the eternity of matter and in its *auto-creation*? Had we not better say;—It is not by a separate, distinct intelligence, which creates or permits evil, which can be angry, be appeased, lets itself be moved by prayer, can even break its own enactments by working miracles, that the world is governed; it is by great general laws like gravitation; these laws are fatal, unchangeable, inexorable.* All things, man among the rest, are subject to their unavoidable empire. The life of all living beings is passed in striving against these laws, and man's in conquering them, in making them his own, in making them his servants. He has made Nature, once his sovereign, his slave. This, in fact, is civilisation; for commerce, arts, letters themselves, and even language, are nothing but the victories of mind triumphing over conquered matter.† Man had long ago provided himself with fire, light, iron, corn, cattle, the shelter of houses and gar-

* Nos destins ténébreux vont par des lois immenses,
Que rien ne déconcerte, et que rien n'attendrit.

VICTOR HUGO.

A truth already expressed in the old saying,—*Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt*; and which Bossuet calls “La loi qui se suit toujours elle-même.”

† I understand by mind, organised, living, thinking matter, as opposed to inorganic matter.

ments: in our own time he has made steam his beast of burden and his steed by land and sea. He has made the sun take his portrait, and the lightning, swifter than light, flying along the telegraph wire, carries his messages and does his commissions.*

I shall be told "to deny the creation and Providence, is to deny all religion." Yes, undoubtedly, all revealed religion. What are religions? Moral legislations, and as such, worthy of all respect, and very necessary at the commencement of society; especially when they form themselves in order to supply new wants, born of new ideas, when they put aside the past in order to open up the future. But religions are only human institutions, and the most fervent Deist is unable to see the finger of his God in them. That which deprives them of all mark of a supernatural origin—not to mention their numerous imperfections—that which condemns them without appeal, is their plurality. "Each one saith that it is better than another, and is confident that it is the best and the truest, . . . they are, let men say what they will, upheld by human hands and

* Statistics show that the power of the machines used for industrial purposes in England alone surpasses the united force of the entire human race.

means. . . The nation, the country, the place gives the religion. . . We are circumcised or baptised; we are Jews, Mahometans, Christians, before we know that we are men. If religion were fixed by a divine tie, nothing in the world could shake it in us. Such a tie could never be broken; if there were in it a touch and spark of the Divinity, it would appear everywhere, and produce effects which would be miraculous." Thus wrote the Canon Pierre Charron (*de la Sagesse*, Book II. chap. 5), and what is more he dared to publish it in 1601; this, however, was in the reign of Henry IV., more tolerant, because more sceptical than his predecessors.

I am well aware that men begin to make of the science of religion a science like all others, a science purely human: that men begin to trace clearly its descent, to recognise that each religion springs from another one; * that, in fact, like the languages of Aryan extraction, like civilisation itself, which flowed down from Central Asia to the basins of the Euphrates and the Nile and thence to Europe, they have a common starting point in the patriarchal beliefs of the primitive

* "The gods that be sprung from those who exist no longer."—RIG VĒDA.

Brahmins, in the hymns of the ancient Veda. But even if all the different religions are but successive sects of the one primeval faith, their plurality, still more their hostility, would be none the less evident, and the argument would lose none of its force. Not to mention the savage dogma which, in spite of St. Paul,* dooms to everlasting damnation all who are, who have been, or who shall be outside the Catholic Church, be they Confucius, Çakia Mouni (Buddha), Socrates, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Spinoza, Kant, Washington, Lincoln.

“Man’s heart is thunderstruck at the idea,” says Fenelon, priest though he was. And the hard-hearted Calvin himself calls it “*decretum horribile*.”† But how conceive that the common Father of men has given the truth to some, error to all the rest? That He has so highly blessed

* “Each man shall be judged according to the law that he knew.”

† It was by this impious doctrine of grace, and that of predestination, that the social distinctions to which Europe was a prey, from the fall of the Roman Empire till the French Revolution, were maintained and justified. “On the divine feudalism was built up a secular and visible feudalism . . . a few of the elect in heaven, a few of the elect on earth.”—EDG. QUINET.

those who live in some countries, so cruelly disinherited those who inhabit the rest of the globe? To accept the dogma of grace, that is to say, of arbitrary caprice, or to submit the justice of God to the chances of birth, to the degrees of latitude and longitude—is it not to do Him a cruel injury? To all, I would say to the Deist, He has given conscience, which is the same, regard being had to the amount of enlightenment acquired by civilisation, in every place, and in every age. To all He would have given a religion, a good and true one, His own, in fact, if there were on the earth any other than conscience. All men would have received at their birth this gift, the most precious with which the Creator could endow them, and without which they could be neither equal nor alike, nor brothers.*

Oh! I might well say with Schiller, “Why

* Let the moral laws of Menu, of Buddha, of Confucius, of Zoroaster, of Plato, of Zeno, of Epictetus, of Marcus Aurelius be examined; do we not find in them the same doctrines as in the religious laws of Moses, of Jesus, and of Mahomet? M. Ernest Havet has proved that all the precepts that form what is called the Christian morality, were already to be found in the writings of the Greek philosophers; and M. Paul Janet, again, has shown that, with the aid of the recent writings of Orientalists, we may dis-

admit no religion?—by religion.” It is through piety, yes, through piety, I say, that one refuses to attribute to God the government of the world, because, to attribute it to Him, would be to proclaim the habitual victory of the genius of evil over the genius of good, and to say, like Paul to the Corinthians, “the devil is the god of this world.” Our conscience revolts at the idea of

cover the same precepts in the teaching of Confucius, of Buddha, and of Menu, every one of them, with no exception, even the command to love our enemies, and to return good for evil. We may then affirm with Buckle (vol. i. p. 164) that since the constitution of human society, morality has not made a step in advance. It is knowledge only which has advanced, which yet advances, and which always will advance.

And he adds, “to assert that Christianity communicated to man moral truths previously unknown, argues on the part of the assertor either gross ignorance, or else wilful fraud.” *l. c.*, and see the numerous citations given by him in defence of this assertion.

Macaulay says, “It is true that in those things which concern this life and this world, man constantly becomes wiser and wiser. But it is no less true that as respects a higher power and a future state, man, in the language of Goethe’s scoffing fiend,

— ‘bleibt stets von gleichem Schlag

Und ist so wunderlich als wie am ersten Tag.’”

(MACAULAY, *Essay on Ranke’s History of the Popes.*)

what happens by His will, or even by His permission only.* Is it God who is present at a battle, who takes part in it and directs the blows? Does He send a lance into one man's breast, a bullet through another's head; is it God who mows down battalions with grapeshot, who amuses Himself, like Cæsar in the Circus, with the sight of fury and madness, who is delighted with the chorus of groans and curses, and who relishes, like ambrosia, the smell of blood? I read in the newspaper that an honest workman passed with his family near a frozen river on which some children were playing. The ice broke, and the imprudent little ones were plunged in the water. The brave labourer, moved by pity and truly human, advanced to the edge of the ice, stoops down, seizes first one, then another and another, and saves them all from death. But the ice gives way beneath his efforts, he perishes; his own children, who depended on his labour for their bread, were left orphans. Will you say it was God who committed this monstrous iniquity? And am I not more pious than you when I

* " Si c'est par moi qu'ils règnent de la sorte
Je veux, mes enfants, que le diable m'emporte."
BÉRANGER, *Le Bon Dieu*.

only accuse a blind unconscious physical law which equally brings good and evil to pass.*

The theologians, I am aware, will seek a means of escape. "You knew not," they will say, "the state of the victim's soul; this man was perhaps in a state of mortal sin," etc. Very well; and his children pay for his sin. But the fifty-four women crushed to death not long ago in a Swiss church, the roof of which fell in from the weight of the snow, and the 2,700 persons burnt alive last year in a church in Chili, because the priests, flying with their relics and their fetishes, had shut the doors of the sacristy—will you affirm that they all equally deserved a frightful death, that they all equally deserved to be punished by the God whom they had come to adore? Once more, it is I who am pious, when, instead of accusing

* "It were better," says Bacon, "to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of Him. Plutarch saith well to that purpose. 'Surely,' saith he, 'I had rather a great deal men should say that there was no such man at all as Plutarch, than that they should say that there was one Plutarch who would eat his children as soon as they were born.'"—BACON, *Essays, Of Superstition*. Yet the Christians say that their God "so loved the world" that He caused His only Son to die a shameful death, and now through the aid of a continual miracle to be everlastingly eaten by the faithful!

God, who ought to know everything, to foresee everything, to be all-powerful, I lament that a physical law works with so much blindness and cruelty.

I know too that this time the spiritualists will unite with the theologians, that they will both cry in chorus, "Wait, justice will be done in another life." Alas, my friends, are you quite sure? Do you not once again take for a certainty what is but a fervent hope. No one has ever come back from that other life to announce that it would not fail us. It is, then, a pure supposition which you make "*somnia non docentis sed optantis*" (Cicero). I have a right to say to you in turn, "Wait, and you will recognise directly that your pure supposition may well be a pure illusion.

Let us resume the subject.

It is not yesterday that the belief in these necessary laws which rule the world—laws without justice, without mercy, without pity—spread itself among men.* It is as old as human tradition. The progress from polytheism to monotheism is thought to be immense. I do not feel quite so sure about

* "Nature is deaf to the complaints and prayers of man ; she sends him back to himself without mercy."—FEUERBACH.

this progress. In the first place it is monotheism which has bred intolerance. Polytheistic religions voluntarily admitted strange gods into their Pantheon, and were far from prescribing their followers. "Dignus Roma locus quo Deus omnis eat."* It was not as adorers of Christ, but as members of a secret society (hetæria)

* "When the Romans were besieging Veii, one of them approached the national goddess and said to her, 'Wilt thou come to Rome, Juno?' (Visne Romam ire, Juno?) The strange goddess replied, 'I am willing.' She was carried within the Roman Pale, and her people followed her there. This story a hundred times repeated is that of every Roman conquest." (Edg. QUINET, *Le génie des Religions*, Liv. vii.).

"The tolerating spirit of idolaters," says Hume, "both in ancient and modern times, is very obvious to any one who is the least conversant in the writings of historians and travellers. When the oracle of Delphi was asked what rites or worship was most acceptable to the gods? 'Those legally established in each city,' replied the oracle (Xenophon Memorabilia, lvi.). Even priests in those ages could, it seems, allow salvation to those of a different community. . . . The intolerance of almost all religions which have maintained the unity of God is as remarkable as the contrary principle among Polytheists." (HUME, *the Natural History of Religion*, sec. iv. See too Bishop WARBURTON, in *The Divine Legation of Moses* (Book II, section 6), On the Universal Toleration of Antiquity; and GIBBON, *Decline and Fall* (chap. xvi.).

hostile to the empire and to imperial institutions, that the early Christians were prosecuted before they became themselves the prosecutors. Modern science then seems to be bringing back men's minds from monotheism to polytheism. On this point I must explain myself.

All these gods of India, of Egypt, of Assyria, of Greece, were never anything but the personification of natural forces—*Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor* (Petronius), and the diversity of effects, which made men believe in the plurality of causes, opened the way for a belief in the plurality of gods. *Tot numina quot nomina.** Thus, leaving on one side the primitive faith of the Hindoo shepherds, and confining ourselves to the worship of ancient Hellas, to the gods of Homer and Phidias,—Zeus, the cloud-compeller, presided in the upper regions of the atmosphere, which was believed to be the dwelling-place of fiery meteors, the abode of thunder and lightning. His mate Heré was dominant in the lower part,

* "The common appellation of Dii, Dei, Divi, given to all the beings who are the objects of worship, comes from the Sanscrit root *Div*, (to shine) and signifies neither more nor less than (the brilliant.) These words are always applied to the gods, who were so called when the

whence fell the rain and fogs. Apollo gave the light of day, his sister that of night ; Ouranos was heaven, Gaia, the earth ; Poseidon, the ocean ; Hestia, fire ; Demeter, and Dionysos, the necessary aliments, etc. There in Ancient Greece, the oldest name for the gods, say the learned, was the same as that of the laws (Themis) ; and these different gods, even the highest in position and the chief of Olympus, were all subject to the unchangeable will of a superior and anterior deity, a hidden, blind, unconscious god, who was called Destiny (*Ἄρτη*), and whose irrevocable decrees had preceded the origin of the world. This *Fatum*, from whom, when adopted by the Latins, its neuter name seems to take away all personality, is precisely the last link in the chain of laws, implacable indeed, but always regular even in their appa-

Aryans arrived at their period of Star-worship. The stars being almost the only fetiches which continued to be adored, the word *Deus* became the synonym of (mighty being,) and carried westward, it was applied by the Aryans to those beings which were the objects of a worship. It is thus that, whilst ideas modify and transform themselves, expressions subsist, and the word which signified a star, now serves to define an immaterial and unique being, the Creator of the universe" (*DE MONTROURI, Le Fetichisme*).

rent irregularities, which govern inexorably the material existence of men and things—we might almost add, the actions of men, for that which is called their free-will is always subject to the laws which rule the universe, and themselves in the universe. This is remarkably confirmed by moral statistics (on crimes, suicide, marriage, etc.), when isolated facts are accounted for by the totality of general facts.* “Human freedom, which all men pride themselves on,” says Spinoza, with great truth, “is only the consciousness of their will joined to their ignorance of the causes which determine it.”† In fact, if restraint is a necessity which we perceive, necessity is a check which we do not remark. Kant, also, recognises in numerous

* If it has been proved, for instance, that the number of marriages is in a direct ratio with abundance or scarcity of food, it follows that in a country where food is abundant, the will of the two consenting parties is determined, without their suspecting it, by the ease with which they can support themselves.

† M. Littré expresses the same idea in somewhat different language. “Our will,” he says, “is not a faculty which inclines of itself towards such and such motives; on the contrary, it is this or that motive which inclines our will to take a certain resolution.”

passages, cited by Buckle (*History of Civilisation*, note A to chap. i., vol i.), the existence of a necessity destructive of liberty. "Rejecting, then," adds the illustrious and much to be regretted Buckle, who raises himself from man to history, "the metaphysical dogma of free-will, and the theological dogma of predestined events, we are driven to the conclusion that the actions of men, being determined solely by their antecedents, must have a character of uniformity, that is to say must, under precisely the same circumstances, always issue in precisely the same events . . . all the vicissitudes of the human race, their progress or their decay, their happiness or their misery must be the fruit of a double action: an action of external phenomena on the mind, and another action of the mind on the phenomena" (Buckle, *History of Civilisation*, vol. i., p. 18, second edition, 8vo).

Let us resume the subject.

Genesis says, "God made man in his image." We might answer, "And so, too, conversely." It is plain enough in fact, that it was men who made the gods. Six centuries before Jesus Christ, the Greek philosopher Xenophanes combated in the following terms the superstition

of his time. "Mortals fancy, that the gods have their form, their garments, their language. The Thracians adored a god with red hair: if oxen and lions had hands to shape images, they would design divine forms like to their own countenances." In the same manner Anaxagoras said, "If the birds made themselves a god, he would have wings: the god of horses would have four legs." And 2,400 years later, Feuerbach explains in one short phrase what he understands by anthropomorphism. "A god [objective and] supernatural is nothing else than a supernatural *Ego*: the [subjective] being of man who has exceeded his bounds and raised himself above his [objective] being." * Büchner

* "He (man) affirms his dreams . . . beholding the phenomena of the physical world, he felt certain impressions, which impressions, endowed by his imagination with a body, became his gods" (RENAN, *Études d'Histoire Religieuse*, p. 16). And Hume says, "By degrees the active imagination of man, uneasy in this abstract conception of objects, about which it is incessantly employed, begins to render them more particular, and to clothe them in shapes more suitable to its natural comprehension. It represents them to be sensible, intelligent beings, like mankind; actuated by love and hatred, and flexible by gifts and entreaties, by prayers and sacrifices. Hence the origin of religion" (*Philosophical Works*, vol. iv. p. 472).

adds, "Think of the poetical heaven of the Greeks, peopled with ideal figures, with gods eternally young and beautiful, who live, enjoy themselves, fight just like men, and find the greatest charm of their existence in taking a personal part in human destinies; think of the gloomy and irascible Jehovah of the Jews, who punishes to the third and fourth generation; of the heaven of the Christians, where God shares his omnipotence with his Son, where the blessed are arranged in a hierarchy, in accordance with our earthly ideas: of the heaven of the Catholics, where the Virgin intercedes with the Saviour for the guilty with womanly tenderness and eloquence: of the heaven of the Orientals, which promises to believers numberless Houris of undecaying beauty: of the heaven of the Greenlander, where happiness consists in a large supply of blubber: of the happy hunting-fields of the wild Indians, where a never-failing supply of game rewards the blessed: of the heaven of the old Germans, who drink in Valhalla, mead from the skulls of their conquered foes, etc. Everywhere human weaknesses, human passions, a longing for human enjoyment."

"The religious problem," says M. Émile Burnouf (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, No. for 15th April,

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1868), "presents this alternative,—either religions are the immediate and voluntary work of a hidden power which makes a present of them to man at certain moments of his history . . . or else they are the spontaneous production of the ordinary forces of nature whose actions, being spread over long periods, manifest themselves in successive phases. In the first case, there would be no valid reason for attacking any particular religion . . . the intolerance of religions for one another thus becomes reprehensible from every point of view. In the other case, these sudden acts of an invisible power disappear: God ceases continually to renew and repair His works. . . . Instead of being the workman, He becomes the model: the real workman is man; he who builds temples, raises altars, offers sacrifices, prays, . . . is the interpreter of religious thought, the prophet who announces it. Thus under the hypothesis we are considering, and which is that of science, religions are guided in their course by natural laws. As a living being springs from an invisible germ, increases in the womb, and when at liberty arrives at its greatest vigour, sees in time its vital power decrease, and at length returns to the elements from which it came: so a new religion is born in

the bosom of a people without their perceiving it ; it is at first a secret society, a mystery : very soon it becomes powerful, gains sway over new minds, becomes all powerful, afterwards it diminishes and sees the place it once held invaded little by little by a new idea, in which it is at length absorbed.” (*La Science des Religions.*)

At the birth of every successive faith the same thing happens, under some shape or other, as took place in the first councils of Christianity, at which the foundations of the new religion were laid. The new dogmas, even the most abstract ones, are put to the vote of the Fathers and Doctors. *Placetne hoc omnibus ? Placet.* And through the help of this formula a charter is drawn up. One sees plainly enough, that in all times and in all countries men, like the bards in the Vedic Hymns, may proclaim themselves authors of the Gods.*

* Religions have now so completely lost their importance that we see them sacrificed every day for motives of interest or even of convenience. Who can name a princess, Catholic or Protestant, who would refuse to enter the Greek church, in order to become a Russian Grand-Duchess ? Again, in the case of marriages between persons of different faiths, it is on consideration of mere

Let us, then, never seek in heaven—a word devoid of meaning—the explanation of what comes to pass on earth. But it will be said, to avow our profound ignorance of all the great problems of general life and particular destiny, problems which man endeavours perhaps in vain to fathom and to resolve, is to avow that we live in an inferior, imperfect, incomplete world, where man can no more satisfy his aspirations, the aspirations of a legitimate curiosity, than his dreams of lasting happiness in ideal perfection. Alas! who doubts it? Were it necessary indeed to prove that the world were imperfect, would it not be enough to point to the face of the earth, one vast field of carnage, where conservation takes place by destruction, where life is only supported by death, and only nourished by life.* *Bellum*

expediency that parents, without the right to do so, determine the religion of their children. And since the world is so completely indifferent as to whether we profess one religion or another, why does it not show itself equally indifferent as to whether we profess any at all?

* "Physiology writes over the portals of life, '*Debemur morti nos nostraque*,' with a profounder meaning than the Roman poet attached to that melancholy line. Under whatever disguise it takes refuge, whether fungus or oak, worm or man, the living protoplasm not only ultimately

omnium contra omnes. The herring devours the smaller molluscs, and a shark devours a shoal of herrings: the partridge eats insects, and the hawk eats the partridge. Man devours all creation, and man kills man.* Only reckon up the victims of murderous superstition; or the hecatombs of the human herd which in their sojourn on earth the great Pontiffs of the God Sabaoth—those mighty butchers who are called conquerors—Cambyses, Attila, Gengis Khan, Napoleon, have slaughtered. Well might one say with wild De Maistre, “the earth continually fed with blood is but one huge altar, on which all that

dies, and is resolved into its mineral and lifeless constituents, but is always dying; and, strange as the paradox may sound, could not live unless it died” (HUXLEY, in *Fortnightly Review*, February, 1869).

* “By dint of a close study and observation of nature, the philosopher has come to the conclusion that destruction is the perpetual law and condition of life, of its increase and progress; some are continually sacrificed for others, and without it the others could not flourish; so life ranges itself and builds itself up on death, on great layers of hecatombs; the weak is the prey of the strong, and this necessity is found everywhere, in history as well as in nature. We hide it as much as possible, but look closely, and it may always be discovered” (SAINTE-BEUVE *Nouveaux Lundis*, ix. p. 101).

lives must be unceasingly sacrificed until the consummation of all things, the extinction of evil, the death of death."

If it were necessary to prove yet further that this world is incomplete, one could do so no less easily by a fact, without and, as it were, in a single word. Not only have we but one mouth to breathe, talk, sing, eat, drink, spit, vomit with; but what is yet stranger, and yet more incomprehensible, all the great animals of the earth's creation, man among the number, have but one and the same organ for the vilest and the noblest functions of animal life; generation and the excretions.

Well, then, it will be said, why we are in this inferior, imperfect, incomplete world, while the imagination of each of us has dreamt of a better one, has built up another less barbarous and less defective, worthier superior creatures, and their vast ambition.

Why?

Tes pourquoi, dit le Dieu, ne finiront jamais.

We might just as well ask why does the earth revolve round the sun, and the sun turn on its axis. Why am I myself, why are you, you; why,

as D'Alembert's Indian Prince asks, is there any one and any thing. Childish questions if you like; "questions of men born blind asking what is light," but which, remaining without hope of an answer, frighten the mind and reason. We should never ask "Why"? We should only ask "How"? To this form only of the question can human knowledge give an answer.

IV.—OF THE SOUL.

Admitting the workman of the work—God the watch-maker, as Goethe mockingly called Him—but rejecting Providence, the old fortune-teller (*anus fatidica*), as Epicurus called it, Voltaire rejects the soul too, regarded as an immaterial substance distinct from the body, and which had preceded and would survive its temporary abode. He only saw it in the body itself, as indeed he might have seen God in the world, the universal soul of the universal body. “If one admits,” he says in effect, “that God could give to a certain portion of living matter arranged in a certain way, and which we call the eye or the ear, the gift of sight or of hearing, why not admit that He could give to another part of the organism called the brain, the gift of thought?” Here he is invincible, and so, too, when he adds, “If the soul were a separate being, thought would not only be its mode of action, but its essence; it would always be thinking, which is far from being the case. During deep sleep, lethargy, a fit, does man think?” Again, he is irrefutable when he says to this effect, “All these immaterial and immortal souls, given to the innumerable gene-

rations of men since the creation," (he should have said "to all the animated beings which people all worlds throughout space and time,") "whence come they?" From what inexhaustible treasure house does God take them? And into what other universe beyond space and time will He make them pass after this life's short pilgrimage? And when did all these souls, come we know not whence, and bound we know not whither, join those bodies which they are destined to animate and to govern?* Was it at the very moment of conception, of procreation? If so, then, as Voltaire says, with his sensible laugh, "God would be on the watch at every assignation," in all worlds, and at every moment of eternity, in order to send forth a soul seed and a body seed. And I dare not repeat, as coarsely as he does, in what an infamous neighbourhood the soul would be lodged during the nine months of pregnancy. —Is it at the moment of birth? But the child had already embryonic life; he might have died, having already existed in his mother's womb.

* "Ignoratur enim quæ sit natura animæ;
Nata sit, an, contra nascentibus insinuetur."
LUCRETIVS.

The soul which he received, with the respiratory life, is respiration, is breath, the breath of life which God, according to Genesis, breathed into the face of every man. It is the *πνεῦμα* of the Greeks, which becomes *ψυχή* sensation, then *νοῦς* intelligence; the *spiritus* of the Romans, which becomes *anima* and *mens*. Is it true then that the soul entered along with the first breath of air? When and at what moment?

And if man has a soul, why should not monkeys, dogs, elephants, parrots, and so, step by step, all the other animals, down to the oyster and the coral insect, have one too? Montaigne and La Fontaine say Yes, if Descartes says No. In fact, they have ideas, and combinations of ideas, just as well as men. And their soul, would it be immortal like our own, as our friend * * * would have it, or at least would have us allow to be possible?* But what remuneration will they receive for their acts done in this life? In spite of all Genesis says about the covenant God made

* "Most of the arguments of philosophers in favour of the immortality of man, apply equally to the permanence of this principle [an immaterial one] in other living beings." (AGASSIZ; *Contributions to the Natural History of the United States*, vol. i. p. 60-64.)

with animals, they have no knowledge of good and evil, no sense of what is just and unjust. They have no sort of free-will; they follow their natural inclinations as a river flows in its channel, and on that account they deserve neither reward nor punishment. And why not extend the gift of a soul to the vegetable world? Plants, too, have life, respiration, and the union of the sexes. One soon becomes involved in inextricable difficulties, in mazes without end, and in ridiculous contradictions.*

On the contrary, the belief that the brain is

* "An incorporeal being which moves a body, an tangible being which touches my organs, a simple being which increases with age, an incorruptible being which perishes by degrees!"—(Letters of Memmius to Cicero.)

"If the soul," says D'Holbach, "makes my arm to move when nothing opposes it, nevertheless, it cannot make my arm raise a weight which is too heavy for it. Behold, then, a mass of matter which annuls the impulse given by a spiritual cause, which, having no connection with matter, ought to have no more difficulty in moving the world, than in moving an atom."

For an account of the various opinions which have prevailed on the seat and origin of the soul, see Montaigne (Book II. chap. 12) who adds, "He who would make a collection of the blunders of human wisdom would have wonders to tell us."

the seat and organ of thought, as the eye is of sight, the ear of hearing, the nerves of feeling, the stomach of digestion, the lungs of breathing, the heart of circulation,—this belief, I say, explains and resolves all problems with perfect ease and clearness. We can easily perceive that thought has its origin in the brain, like sight in the eye, hearing in the ear. We feel that the labour of thought fatigues the brain, just as the labour of walking tires the muscles of the legs. It is in the brain that our different organs and the nervous system have their centre, in order that they may transmit to it impressions from without, otherwise, deprived as it is of innate ideas,* it would have no ideas whatever; it is the brain, the seat of the will as of the understanding, which, by means of the seven pairs of nerves, that cross each other in our neck, sends its orders to the members, its servants. The brain in our organism would have no function, no sense, would be, as has been well said, “*un être de raison sans raison d’être;*” if it did not produce thought. Our intelligence is born

* *Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerit in sensu.* Locke and Condillac have victoriously demonstrated this aphorism. Now, if all our ideas come from the senses, how can ideas survive the senses?

with it, is developed with it, changes with it, and with it is destroyed.*

* Gigni pariter cum corpore, et una
Crescere sentimus, pariterque senescere mentem.

LUCRETIVS.

"The weakness of the body, and that of the mind in infancy, are exactly proportioned; their vigour in manhood, their sympathetic disorder in sickness, their common gradual decay in old age. The step further seems unavoidable, their common dissolution in death."—(HUME, *Essay on the Immortality of the Soul.*)

This, it seems to me, is demonstrated by the experiments of physiology, a new science, yet in its youth, but which already begins to unveil the mysteries of psychology, and boldly announces its claim to dethrone and take this latter's place. (See the works of Magendie, Flourens, Bain, and the illustrious Helmholtz: and recently, in France, the writings of Berthelot, Robin, Broca, Vulpian, Sée, Luys, etc., etc.; and in England, in a still newer but scarcely less important science, that of anthropology, the works of Sir J. Lubbock, of Sir C. Lyell, of Huxley, Wallace, etc.)

I shall permit myself but one short quotation on this subject. "It is oxygen which is always both the exciter of physico-chemical phenomena and the condition of the functional activity of organized matter, . . . when we inject oxygenised blood (arterial) into muscular tissue, or into nervous, glandular, or *cerèbral* ditto, whose vital properties are extinct, . . . we see, under the influence of this oxygenised fluid, each tissue resume its peculiar vital properties. The muscles regain their contractibility,

If it should be asked, "How can matter have the gift of thought"? I would ask in turn, "How has it the gift of life"? And it would be as hard for my querist to answer me as for me to reply to his question. Nevertheless, matter lives, therefore it can think.*

Brain-thought, once it be admitted, immediately explains by its successive enlargement what is justly called the scale of beings. Comparative anatomy shows that if intelligence increases step by step, from the oyster to man, it is always in a direct ratio with the development of cerebral matter. The essential characteristic

the power of movement and sensibility returns to the nerves, and the *cerebral faculties* re-appear in the brain. For instance, when we inject oxygenised blood into the decapitated head of a dog, by means of the carotid artery, we see come back, little by little, not only the vital properties of the muscles, the glands, and the nerves, but we perceive those of the brain also return in like measure, the head regains its sensibility, the glands secrete, and the animal executes movements which appear to be directed by volition."—(Claude BERNARD, *Le Problème de la Physiologie*.)

* "Mind is a property of nervous matter, as gravitation is of every material particle, we know each fact by experience."—E. LITTRÉ.

which distinguishes the human race from the highest species of the other vertebrates, is not the teeth or the thumb of the bi-manè—as Cuvier and Helvétius would have it—but the volume of his brain lobes, which is always, says Carl Vogt, in a direct ratio with the extent of his intelligence. Is it not a natural malformation of the brain which produces idiots — those half-developed men? Again, do not the physiologists agree that if the human brain does not weigh 1,049 grammes in a man, and 907 in a woman, idiocy is inevitable? Why is the mean weight of the brain 1,450 grammes among white men, 1,228 among the Aborigines of Australia; and may it not sink as low as 500 grammes with the microcephale, as with the great man-like apes, the gorillas, the ourang-outangs, and the chimpanzees? Why, too, do the physiologists allow that the posterior part of the brain, which governs the instinctive movements, is common to men and animals, whereas the anterior or frontal part, the home of the intellect, belongs to man alone? And why have they marked out in the structure and volume of this anterior part the distinctive characteristics of the various races of the human family?

And let those who would deny the unity of

living beings, and make man double, apply to themselves these lines—

“ Instinct and reason, how can we divide ?
 ’Tis the fool’s ignorance and pedant’s pride.”

PRIOR.*

How can they distinguish the instincts which they call animal, and which they say spring from the body, such as the instinct of preservation, which often causes selfishness and cruelty ; or that of reproduction, which excites the amorous passions and produces family affection, from the sentiments and thoughts, which they say come from the soul, although suggested by those instincts of which they are simply the consequents ? Where shall we place the boundary line ? I defy them to trace and to define it. I defy them to separate clearly that which they would grant to the immortal soul, and that which they would grant to animality.

* Imitated by Voltaire (*Dictionnaire Philosophique, L’Ame.*)

“ Avez-vous mesuré cette mince cloison
 Que semble séparer l’instinct de la raison.”

“ Professor Agassiz . . . confesses that he cannot say in what the mental faculties of a child differ from those of a young chimpanzee.” See the whole passage cited by Lyell, *The Antiquity of Man*, p. 493.

Again, it is the belief that thought is the product of the brain, which alone explains local and temporary aberrations, or those general and lasting ones which reason undergoes. What strange and terrible effects are produced, for instance, by partial apoplexy, by certain illnesses, such as madness.* The man of the most powerful genius, who takes a large draught of strong wine at once, feels his *sensorium commune* upset, until digestion has taken place, and the balance is re-established. A violent fever gives him delirium, and if a drop of blood forces itself into the vessels of the brain, behold he loses his memory, or his will, or his reasoning powers, or all his mental faculties. He at once falls below the level of the brutes. I beg, with the greatest confidence, my opponents to answer honestly—who can look on a madman and believe firmly in an immaterial immortal soul, separate from, pre-existent to, and destined to survive the body.† And now, if we be asked,

* “The saliva of a wretched mastiff touching the hand of Socrates, might disturb and destroy his intellect.”

MONTAIGNE.

† Pinel has classed madness simply among the other derangements of our organs. It has been said of him “that he raised the deranged to the dignity of patients.”

“there is then for us no immortal life, no remuneration according to our works as the established creeds teach”? Must we say with Diderot, “I have not the hope of being immortal, because the desire of it has not given me that vanity”? Or, again, must we admit that the souls of our earth pass from planet to planet according to the poetical fancy of Jean Reynaud and Sir David Brewster? Or shall we believe that they pass on from man to man in humanity itself, and that these transmigrations explain its progress, as we are taught to believe by the system of Pierre Leroux? Or should we adopt the ideas of Saint Simon, of Fourier, of Owen, etc.? And which of them shall we adopt? To all these queries I know no other reply than the motto of Montaigne “Que scay-je?” or Byron’s line,

“All that we know is nothing can be known.”

Unless we add the reflection of D’Alembert ;

And Esquirol says, expressly, “Mental alienation, which ancient nations regarded as an inspiration or a chastisement of the gods, and which afterwards was looked on as demoniacal possession, and again, in later times, was thought to be caused by magic—mental alienation, I say, in all its kinds and its innumerable varieties, differs in nothing from other maladies.”

“Since we know nothing about it, no doubt it is no concern of ours to know any ‘more.’” The only valid reason to my mind, the only plausible, and at all events very specious one which can be given in favour of a future life,—admitting always the necessity that justice should be done,—is that we have the hope of living after death, and that second life can alone clear up our doubts and deliver to us the secret of universal destiny ; that this hope of another life, which will tell us all things, is, as it were, a promise, which the Author of all things—or the order of all things—seems to have made to us in giving us life here below.*

* Is it not a simple form of habit, and the attachment which springs from it, to ideas just as well as to persons and things ? In this case sentiment, however respectable, would be nothing but a prejudice, and, as such, subject to illusions. Our senses aver that the sun turns about the earth ; it is reason, aided by science, which tells us that the earth turns about the sun. Even a Protestant clergyman allows as much :—

“The universal voice of mankind is not infallible. It was the universal belief once, on the evidence of the senses, that the earth was stationary ;—the universal voice was wrong. The universal voice might be wrong in the matter of a resurrection.”—Rev. W. F. ROBERTSON’S (late of Brighton) Sermons.

“That which is called instinct, and which seems to

But this would be nothing else than to apply the argument of Anselm of Canterbury, reproduced by Descartes, on the existence of God, to the immortal soul. "Since nothing can come from nothing," said they, "since every effect has a cause, it follows that the idea of God must have an origin, now this origin is nothing else than the existence of God, and this is the only proof which we can ever have." But are we then to conclude, because certain peoples have no idea of a Deity, that there is no God? And from what notion of Him are we to draw the conclusion that He exists, and to determine what He is? Shall it be from the abject idea which the Negro has of his fetish, or from the sublime conception which Plato and Malebranche formed of the great

others of incontestable value, does not deceive my philosopher; and he applies to it his analysis; he discovers its principle and its mode of action; he accounts for it according to the laws of moral optics. He knows that the human heart is a labyrinth so made, and with an echo so well arranged that one and the same voice can both ask and reply. He therefore considers these answers as the simple reflections of desires, the repercussions and reflections of the same thing, which prove nothing more than the internal forge where they originated, and which may well be barren like so many other desires (SAINTE-BEUVE, *Nouveaux Lundis*, vol. ix. p. 104).

geometer? It seems to me that this celebrated argument is beside the question, both as regards God and the soul. It is that form of reasoning which is called in the schools an enthymeme or imperfect syllogism. I therefore conclude that strict logic, putting aside sentiment, accepts but with great difficulty the belief in a future life. I find that all the premises hitherto stated would rather lead us to a contrary conclusion.* We

* "May not the race of man sink like the generations of the mayfly? Why cannot the Creator, so lavish in His resources, afford to annihilate souls as He annihilates insects? Would it not almost enhance His glory to believe it? That, brethren, is the question; and Nature has no reply. The fearful secret of sixty centuries has not yet found a voice. The whole evidence lies before us. We know what the greatest and wisest have had to say in favour of an immortality; and we know how, after eagerly devouring all their arguments, our hearts have sunk back in cold disappointment, and to every proof as we read, our lips have replied mournfully, *that* will not stand. Search through tradition, history, the world within you, and the world without,—except in Christ there is not the shadow of a shade of proof that man survives the grave." (Rev. F. W. ROBERTSON'S Sermon on "The Doubt of Thomas.")

Descartes, too, says, "I confess that by natural reason alone we can make many conjectures about the soul, and have flattering conjectures, but no sort of certainty."

must probably be content to say with the tragic Seneca, and all the Stoics of antiquity,* What shall

* Post mortem nihil est, ipsaque mors nihil . . .

Quæris quo jaceas post obitum loco ?

Quo non nata jacent ? *Troades, Act III.*

“Our insensibility before the composition of the body seems to natural reason a proof of a like state after dissolution; were our horror of annihilation an original passion, not the effect of our general love of happiness, it would rather prove the mortality of the soul; for, as nature does nothing in vain, she would never give us a horror against an impossible event. She may give us a horror against an unavoidable event, provided our endeavours, as in the present case, may often remove it to some distance. Death is in the end unavoidable, yet the human species would not be preserved had not nature inspired us with an aversion towards it.”—(HUME, *Essay on the Immortality of the Soul.*)

See, too, PLINY, (*Natural History*, Book vii., chap. 56.)

“Let us ingenuously confess,” says Montaigne, “that God alone has dictated it [immortality] to us and faith; for 'tis no lesson of nature, and our own reason. And whoever will enquire into his own being and power, both within and without, without this divine privilege; whoever shall consider man impartially and without flattery, will see in him no efficacy or faculty that relishes of anything but death and earth” (Apology for Raymond de Sébonde).

Büchner justly remarks that it would be more reasonable to give the name of immortal to the body and that of mortal to the soul; for the body, if it perishes in its

we be after death? What we were before our birth." Or with Shakespeare and the wisest of the moderns—

"We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."

individual form, remains eternal as to the elements which compose it, and which cannot be annihilated; whilst the soul or thought disappears, like life, along with the combination of elements which had produced it. "I know a man," said Voltaire, "who is firmly persuaded, that at the death of a bee, its buzzing ceases" (Letter to Mdme. Du Deffant).

V.—CONCLUSION.

What matters it after all? For the innumerable disciples of Buddha, the highest degree of happiness consists in annihilation. Each one of them repeats the last words of the Giaour, "I need not paradise, but rest."* At all events let us not go to Asia but keep to our own Europe. Is the belief in another life indispensable to the safety of human society? Montesquieu himself, like Bacon before him, is compelled to admit the

* Quur non, ut plenus vitæ conviva, recedis,
Æquo animoque capis securam stulte, quietem ?

LUCRETIVS.

"We may behold" (in the Introduction to the History of Buddhism, by E. Burnouf) "the wisest men, the noblest moralists, the most generous martyrs, all of them persuaded that existence, even spiritual existence, is an evil, a chastisement, continually renewed by our faults; we see them all longing for annihilation, and certain that they would attain it by the practice of virtue. It is the fear of being born again and of continuing, it is the horror of immortality under all its forms, even among the gods, which urges them to abnegation, to heroism, to unheard-of efforts of patience and courage, with the sole hope of escaping the movement of the world and the wearisome weight of life." (PREVOST PARADOL, *Essais de Littérature et de Politique*, 3rd series, p. 343, 8vo.).

contrary.* Did the austere and virtuous republicans of ancient Rome, the followers of Zeno and

* "The religion of Confucius denies the immortality of the soul, and the sect of Zeno did not believe in it. And yet, though no one would have expected it, these two sects have drawn from their bad principles, consequences, not indeed the just ones, but those which are excellent for society." "Born for society, the Stoics all believed it was their destiny to work for its advancement, and so much the more because all their reward lay with themselves, only happy through their philosophy, it seemed to them that nothing but others' happiness could augment their own" (*Esprit des Lois*, Book xxiv., chaps. 19 and 10).

Montesquieu, when thus speaking, had nevertheless been energetically opposing what he calls the paradoxes of Bayle, viz., "That it is better to be an atheist than an idolater." Or in other terms, "That it is less dangerous to have no religion at all, than to have a bad one," and that "Real Christians could not form a state that would endure."

Bacon however would have been on the side of Bayle, if we may judge from the following passage:—

"Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation; all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue though religion were not but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men. Therefore, atheism did never perturb states; for it maketh men wary of themselves, as looking no farther; and we see the times inclined to atheism, as those of Cæsar Augustus, were civil times" (BACON, *Essays, Of Atheism*).

of Epicúrus, expect a life to come? No more than did the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament, who never mention it, nor even heard of it.* Has man, in short, less merit in avoiding

* There is no one now but is aware that the laws of Moses—like those of Menu long before—only established material rewards and punishments, immediate, and limited to the course of this life: “If you obey, you shall have rain in the spring and autumn, corn, and vine, and oil, and fodder for your cattle . . . but if you do not keep all the commandments, ye shall be accursed in the town and your fields . . . you shall suffer famine, you shall die of wretchedness, of cold, and of fever; you shall have scurf, the itch, fistula, and ulcers in your legs; you shall eat the fruit of your belly, the flesh of your sons and your daughters” (Deuteronomy). So then the people of God, the revealers of monotheism, knew not the immortality of the soul; they only received the first notions of this belief during the captivity at Babylon, and took it as a dogma from the Greek Platonists.”

As there are still some persons so ignorant,—for it can only be attributed to ignorance, as to maintain in England that the Jews held the dogma of the immortality of the soul before the captivity, I subjoin some extracts from English divines, whose authority few will dispute.

“The hypothesis of Bishop Warburton concerning this remarkable fact, which, as far as the law of Moses is unquestionable, made few disciples.” (Dean MILMAN, note in his edition of Gibbon, vol. ii., p. 296.)

“How strong an internal evidence of the truth of what

evil and in choosing good, if he makes his choice, as Fénelon wished that men should love God, without fear of punishment and without hope of reward? Along with the belief in God's providence, for which there is neither present, nor past, nor future, but which regards only the present, all free-will ceases. How can man be master of and responsible for his actions when everything is foreseen, regulated, and ordained beforehand? How could his will, comparable to that of an ant, oppose itself to that of the Lord of the Universe, to the power of the Almighty? Through faith in God's Providence; that is to say, in the dogma of predestination, one falls, on the one hand into Eastern fatalism, for that which must happen, happens, and on the other, into belief

Moses wrote is furnished by the fact that he thus represented the sanction of his law as consisting of temporal rewards and punishments only" (Archbishop WHATELY, *Dissertation in the Encyclopædia Britannica*). So then, because Moses, either knew not, or else fraudulently concealed, the truth which it most concerns mankind to know, we are required to believe in the truth of his mission. How little it serves to have written a book on logic! See too RENAN, *Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse*, p. 126. GIBBON, chap. xv. BUCHNER, *Kraft und Stoff*, p. 213. Bishop WARBURTON, *the Divine Legation of Moses*, passim.

in our impunity from punishment; for when our responsibility ceases, so likewise do our faults and our merits. A criminal, a parricide, might appeal to the doctrine of St. Augustine of St. Thomas, of Calvin, and of Bossuet, and claim to be absolved. He need only say "Since we are all only instruments in the hands of Providence, I could not help killing my father, this murder being decreed by Providence, whose instrument I am." If God's Providence exists then, must we say with Fenelon "Man stirs himself, God leads him." No, I protest, it is not God who compels me, it is my liberty, it is my conscience. Let us not forget that even when reduced to a choice of motives amongst those which rule our will, free-will still suffices as a basis for human responsibility, and consequently, for morality. In the moral world, too, God is a hypothesis, of which I have no need. My conscience has told me in firm, clear, and imperative tones, under pain of remorse (the real hell), if I disobey,—that the good is order; that it is the same as utility for each and all of us; that good is the moral law, as gravitation is a physical law, that our actions should tend to it, as a stone falling from our hands, tends to the centre of the earth. That good is the law of all

beings among themselves, especially of sentient beings, who are alike, who are brothers.

“ If it were necessary,” says our master Diderot, “ to choose between the lot of a bad but rich man, and that of a virtuous but unfortunate one, I should not hesitate. Why is the choice so easy ? Does it not come from the persuasion that there is no bad man but who has often wished to be good, and that no good man ever wished to be wicked ?” If I listen to my conscience which gives me as a rule of conduct, “ Believe what you can, do what you ought,” my conscience, which cannot betray me, which is myself, and the true word of the true God in me, I shall fly from evil and do good without thinking any more of paradise than of hell.*

* “ Allez, lâches humains, que les feux éternels
Empêchent d'assouvir vos désirs criminels,
Vos austères vertus n'en ont que l'apparence.
Mais nous, qui renonçons à toute récompense,
Nous qui ne croyons point aux éternels tourments
L'intérêt n'a jamais souillé nos sentiments.
Le bien du genre humain, la vertu nous anime
L'amour seul du devoir nous a fait fuir le crime.
Oui, finissons sans trouble, et mourons sans regrets.”

* * * * *

FREDERICK THE GREAT.

And as we obey our conscience, so too, let us attend to the voice of science. Let us follow this other guide, no less trustworthy, no less sincere, more impartial, and often more enlightened. Let us never forget that it is science alone which can conquer superstition. Let us never forget that she is better able than even virtue to render service to society.

“For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.
In faith and hope the world will disagree,
But all mankind's concern is charity.”

POPE.

“That suffering is the inevitable consequence of sin, as surely as night follows day, is the stern yet salutary teaching of science. And surely if this lesson were firmly impressed on our minds, if we really believed in the certainty of punishment—that sin could not conduce to happiness—temptation, which is at the very root of crime would be cut away, and mankind must necessarily become more innocent. May we not however go even farther than this, and say that science will also render man more virtuous.” (Sir J. LUBBOCK, *Prehistoric Times*). See too his quotation from Lord Brougham, that science would not only “make our lives more agreeable, but better; and that a rational being is bound by every motive of interest and duty, to direct his mind towards pursuits which are found to be the sure path of virtue as well as of happiness.” (LORD BROUGHAM, *Objects, Advantages, and Pleasures of Science*, p. 39).

“The two oldest, greatest, most widely-spread evils,” [intolerance and war], says Buckle, “which have ever been known, are constantly, though, on the whole, slowly, diminishing; and their diminution has been effected, not at all by moral feelings, nor by moral teachings, but solely by the activity of the human intellect, and by the inventions and discoveries which, in a long course of successive ages, man has been able to make.” (*History of Civilisation*, vol. i. p. 204, 8vo. ed.)

And Cuvier too, said, “The good we do men, however great it may be, is but transitory; the truths we bequeath them are eternal.” So, like science and with science, let us resolutely put aside all that is supernatural, much more all that is divine.* Like her, let us seek for truth, justice, happiness itself in that which is natural, in that which is human. We are on the earth, let us cease aspiring to heaven. Let us cease making gods of ourselves, let us be, and remain men.

Goethe has written somewhere, “The denial of

* “Why do bodies gravitate one towards another? Because God so willed it, said they of old; Because they attract one another, says science.”—LAMENNAIS.

the ordinary belief can only lead to good, when the thinking powers are strong. Reason alone is worthy to succeed to the religion of duty." I do not dispute it; but Goethe himself has given us the answer to his own objection. A very devout lady said to him one day, "Since you believe neither in Providence, nor the soul, nor the life to come, what can be your end in the present life"?

He answered—"To improve oneself."

The reply is a happy one, but it is possible, I think, to give to life a still larger range; and, at the same time, to duty a broader foundation. If it be true, as Pascal has said, that humanity is but one vast collective being, then we men, its members, ought all to act for the advantage, and not to the detriment, of this intimate and fraternal community. Helvétius, and Mr. John Mill are therefore in the right when they define good as the useful; a noble and simple definition, which, at the same time, gives us the definition of evil.

It is hardly necessary to add that there is here no question of particular, personal and selfish utility, but of common, general and reciprocal usefulness. Let me explain my meaning by an

instance. Why was the devotion of Codrus and of Decius admired so highly by their fellow-countrymen, that divine honours were decreed them. This self-sacrifice, in the opinion of the King of Athens and the Roman Consul, as of all those who expected to profit by it, was eminently beautiful and virtuous, inasmuch as it was eminently useful; one man sacrificing himself for a whole people, a single life redeeming thousands of lives. When we read in Virgil the touching episode of Nisus and Euryalus, "*Me, me, adsum qui feci,*" we are undoubtedly touched by this tender affection, which makes a friend wish to die in place of his friend, but we do not exactly admire it, because from this exchange of one life for another no advantages arise for humanity. On the other hand, we admire the Chevalier d'Assas, "*A moi, Auvergne, voilà l'ennemi!*" because, without the spur of a lively affection, he chose to die in the ambuscade into which he had fallen, in order to warn and save his regiment. He too gave one life for many, the larger interest triumphed over the narrower one. It is then, on the basis of utility, understood and practised in a moral as well as in a physical sense, on this larger basis, replacing the narrow and selfish

calculations of the Christian,* his personal salvation, that "morality, independent of religion," should establish itself, independent of the commands of dogma, and of the fear of punishment or hope of reward. And when the time comes for religions to disappear,—I mean religions which have for principle and sanction the supernatural, the divine,—a new one will establish itself among men with only one dogma, "The Good is common utility," which is called by another name justice,† which in its turn takes the threefold title of freedom, equality, brotherhood. So, then, all the gospel of humanity would be contained in the verse.

"Il se faut entr'aider, c'est la loi de nature."

And now, to conclude, listen to a philosopher working out the same idea with all the eloquence of conviction. It is Emile Littré, the Saint Paul of the positive philosophy, who speaks.

* "So then, religion is nothing more than a calculation of infinite and finite quantities; vice is nothing more than a grand imprudence; and heaven is nothing more than selfishness rewarded with eternal well being."—REV. F. W. ROBERTSON'S *Sermons*.

† "Be just; justice is piety."—*Koran*, S. V. v. 2.

“ If it is certain that in the order of knowledge truth is sought for herself, and for no other reward than the satisfaction of having found her, so too in moral matters, the right is sought for itself, and with no other reward than that of having practised it. Assuredly no one will insult the right by preferring truth to it, or by allowing it less influence over conscience, than truth over the intellect. Thanks to this lofty disinterestedness, the highest social virtues begin to be required of men. The poet of Henry IV. and of Lewis XIII., exclaimed, ‘ A new sorrow appears among men.’ To-day, with a new future before us, I can reverse this mournful verse and say, ‘ A new joy appears among men,’—devotion to humanity. Happy are they who can render it brilliant services. Happy too are they who devote to it the never-ceasing service of an honest life and of honest work. For we can make no better offering to humanity than an honest and laborious life.”

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